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XVII. ADDITIONAL NOTES ON MODERN FOLK PAGEANTRY

Passing mention was made in *English Pageantry* of the appearance of civic giants on the Continent—notably in Belgium and the North of France; and the fact that such figures as Saint Christopher of Salisbury and his European colleagues have reappeared since the recent war has been recorded in an article entitled *Post-Bellum Giants*. Since the publication of that paper, in *Studies in Philology* for January 1921, additional details concerning French and Belgian giants have come to my attention.

Antwerp, Brussels, Hasselt, Douai, Mons, Ath, and Lille are some of the Belgian and French cities which still show their giants on popular festival-days. Most of these feasts centre around the "kermesse," or holiday in honor of the local patron-saint; and though the war interrupted these celebrations, they have been revived, since the coming of peace, with renewed enthusiasm. Fortunately, many of the civic giants were spared from destruction; and when they reappeared, the crowds recognized in them old friends, whom they greeted with a noisy, but none the less profound, emotion. For it should be noted that these figures have acquired a personality, which has made them almost human; and the folk has come to regard them with the same air of ownership with which it invests a popular public character.

One of the most prominent civic giants of Europe is that of Antwerp, Druon Antigoon,¹ who was built in 1534 by Pieter Coecke of Alost. I am indebted to Professor Gustave L. van Roosbroeck, of the University of Minnesota, and to M. Georges Delannoy, of the City Council of Antwerp, for the

¹ Cf. "Post-Bellum Giants," *Studies in Philology*, xviii, 1, p. 6. Cf. also *English Pageantry*, i, pp. 55, and n. 2; 254, 256, for mention of giants and other pageantry at Antwerp.

following additional notes concerning this interesting figure.

Under date of 2 March, 1921, Professor van Roosbroeck writes: "Druon Antigoon is an old acquaintance; I spent my childhood in Antwerp. I remember also very well his spouse, and the other personages of the traditional 'Omme-gang,' as, for example, Op Sinjoorken, de Dolfyn, etc. The old song of the 'Matrooskens,' or 'Sailors,' is the well-known

Naar Oostland willen we varen, . . .

"In Borgerhout, near Antwerp, is the home of four old 'giants' who go out every year to the great delight of young and old. . . ."

Under date of 11 March, 1921, he writes at greater length:

" . . . The reason for promenading Druon Antigoon, the Antwerp Giant, through the streets, once a year, is linked up with an old legend about the origin of the name *Antwerpen*²

"It is told by the people of Antwerp that the Giant is made entirely out of chewed paper:³ Pieter Coecke, it is said, was imprisoned and, being unable to obtain materials, he chewed

² Cf. *English Pageantry*, i, 254, n. 4. Professor van Roosbroeck recounts the story in detail, noting that it is found in sixteenth-century historians. A statue to Brabo (the work of Jef Lambeaux) is in front of the Hôtel de Ville of Antwerp, and the legend is perpetuated on the City Seal. In some accounts, this giant is named "petit Eckhof"; M. van Roosbroeck does not name him; he says: "About the time of the conquest of Gaul by Julius Caesar there lived in a castle near the Schelde a terrific giant who stopped all the ships on the river and exacted a high income tax [sic]. Any captain who refused to submit to his demands was killed. The giant cut off the hands of his numerous victims and threw them into the Schelae, and therefore the city was called *Hand Werpen* (Antwerpen). . . . One of Caesar's generals, Sylvius Brabo, killed the giant, cut off his hand and threw it into the Schelde. Brabo became the first Duke of the country around Antwerp, which was called after him: Brabant." It may be noted that the modern province of Brabant is that district surrounding Brussels, which is the capital of Brabant, as well as of Belgium.

³ It may be noted that the French *papier-mâché* is literally "chewed paper."

all the paper within his reach and pasted, in this fashion, our Giant together. To this legend refers the old folk-song:

De reus heeft dikke beenen,
 De reus heeft dikke beenen,
 De reus heeft dikke beenen,
 Van geknauwd papier.
 Waar heeft hij die gaan leenen?
 Waar heeft hij die gaan leenen?
 Die dikke, vette beenen,
 Van geknauwd papier?

"The giant, as seen to-day, is the work of Pieter Coecke, and his spouse of Daniel Herreyns.⁴ But their heads are modern. The old heads once fell off and have been replaced by exact imitations. The real heads can still be seen in the Steen, the Antwerp Museum of Antiquities.

"I am sending you the words of the song *Naar Oostland willen we varen* (to sail)— a song which is sung by the Matrooskens or Little Sailors. It is adapted with only one word of difference from an old, well-known Flemish song, *Naar Oostland willen we rijden* (to ride). The music of this song can be found in Willems' book, *Oud Vlaemsche Liederen*, if I am not mistaken. . . The Matrooskens follow the Giant and his Spouse on a ship drawn by four or six strong horses.⁵

"The Dolphin dates from the sixteenth century at least. I remember having seen old engravings of the Antwerp *Ommegang* in which the Dolphin appeared. On his back is

⁴ *Post-Bellum Giants*, already referred to, records this fact. M. Delanoy notes, in 1921, that the giants had suffered much at the hands of the Occupying Forces: he says: "Les Allemands logés dans le magasin des géants ont commis beaucoup de dégâts, en enlevant les cordages et la voilure du bateau, les cuirs des géants, et en brisant méchamment ces chars et engins."

⁵ Cf. *English Pageantry*, i, pp. 254, 256 and n. 6. Many examples of ships in pageants will be found in this book; see the Index under *Ship, Ships, Half-Moon, Clermont, Laclede, Don de Dieu, Welcome, drakar*, etc.

riding a child armed with a spout through which it pours unexpectedly a stream of water on the onlookers.⁶

“ . . . In the list of civic giants from Malines⁷ there appears Op-Signoorken. It is claimed by the old *burgers* of Antwerp that the real Op-Signoorken is in Antwerp, and that the Op-Signoorken of Malines has been stolen from Antwerp, but recovered later. In the Steen one finds a small wooden statue of a man in an eighteenth-century costume: tradition claims that it is the real Op-Signoorken. He is called ‘the oldest citizen of Antwerp.’ The word *Signoorken* refers to the fact that the inhabitants of Antwerp are nicknamed *Signoren*, because in the sixteenth century they called themselves Signore, or Señor, after the contemporary Spanish-Italian fashion. Besides, there settled at that time, at Antwerp, a large colony of Italian and Spanish merchants and soldiers. *Op* refers to the fact that [the image] was thrown *up* in the air. Before he touches the ground, he is caught in a big sheet. The song of Op-Signoorken is:

En laat hem toch niet vallen,
Met zijnen neus in 't slijk.
Alle gelijk!”

M. Delannoy sends a few additional details: he dates the “birth” of Druon 1535, and spells the name of the constructor Pierre [Pieter] Coucke; he notes further that the giant is twenty-four feet tall. *La géante*, constructed in 1765 by the painter Herreyns, is made “in the form of the goddess Minerva”—an interesting example of the classical influence superimposed on the *naïveté* of folk-custom. In early times, the Ommegang was an annual affair, taking place in connection with the *kermesse* (the third Sunday in August);

⁶ Cf. the element of the unexpected in the squibs of the London street-processions, and the tricks of the crowd humorously described by Ned Ward. (*A Civic “Triumph” circa 1700*, in *Journ. Eng. Germ. Philol.* for January, 1918, [xvii, 1] pp. 128 ff.)

⁷ *Post-Bellum Giants*, p. 6.

but of late years, it has occurred less often.⁸ In 1889, says M. Delannoy, the two giants were sent to Paris for the charity fête organized for the victims of an explosion in an Antwerpian cartridge-factory. In 1899, the Ommegang formed part of the Van Dyck celebration; but it does not seem to have emerged from its *magasin* again until 1920, when the Plantin celebration (which should have taken place in August, 1914) finally occurred.⁹ A huge poster announcing the Ommegang was displayed by the civic authorities; a copy of this, sent by M. Delannoy, may be found in the Harvard Library.

I am indebted to Professor van Roosbroeck for the words of the two songs—that of the Sailors, and the Giant's Song (*Reuzenlied*)—here transcribed:

NAAR OOSTLAND

Naar Oostland willen we rijden,
Naar Oostland willen we mee,
Alover die groene heide,
—Frisch over die heide—
Daar is er een betere stee.

Als wij binnen Oostland komen,
Als wij binnen Oostland zijn,
Daar worden we binnen gelaten,
—Frisch over die heide—
Zij heeten ons welkom zijn.

Wij drinken den wijn er met schalen,
En 't bier ook zooveel 't ons belieft,
Daar worden we binnengelaten,
—Frisch over die heide—
Daar woont er mijn zoete lief.

⁸ M. Delannoy notes that "de cet Ommegang il existe encore: la baleine et les trois dauphins, le bateau et les trois barquettes, le géant et la géante. Sont disparus: le cheval marin, l'éléphant, le dromadaire, le dragon, l'enfer, le Parnasse, etc." It is interesting to compare this list with such a one as that of the pageants at Chester (*Eng. Pag.*, i, pp. 44, 45, and notes), and with the arbors and "wildernesses" of the London civic pageants (*ibid.*, ch. vi, *passim*). The "enfer" suggests a survival of miracle-plays.

⁹ A letter from another Belgian source records that on this occasion "est sorti un géant qui lançait un jet d'eau qui a fort amusé la foule." Cf. above, note 6, and *Eng. Pag.*, i, pp. 254 and 256, n. 6.

to "Don" under Spanish rule, and that a name which originated with a saint's image became later connected with a charitable nobleman of the region. Gayant, the Giant of Douai, bears the Picard form of *géant* as a proper name, but Ambiorix, of Ath (also called "le Tyran"), suggests an historical background.

The *Echo du Nord*, a journal of Lille, records, in its number of 18 July, 1921, preparations for the marriage of Lydéric and Jeanne Maillotte:

Comité des fêtes de Fives-Saint-Maurice
MARIAGE DE LYDÉRIC ET DE JEANNE MAILLOTTE
(Cortège comique)

On nous communique:

La température, les moustiques et les bizarreries du coefficient n'empêchent pas ce Comité de travailler avec . . . chaleur à l'organisation des fêtes qui seront données à Fives-Saint-Maurice, le dimanche 14 août prochain, à l'occasion du mariage de Lydéric et Jeanne Maillotte.

Des lettres d'invitation ayant été lancées un peu partout. . . Paris nous envoie sa Reine, la Cour du Roi Clotaire y sera représentée pour faire honneur à Lydéric, ce digne fils de Salvaert, les géants Phinaert, etc. les Archers de Jeanne Maillotte, les Hurlus avec leur légendaire tambour-major, la municipalité d'Tartagrobob (canton de Monpoing-sur-Deûle) avec les pompiers, la rosière, la musique, tous ont promis d'y assister.

Cet enthousiasme des Tartagrobobriens à participer à cette fête s'explique en ce sens que l'osier de nos géants lillois a poussé dans les champs de cette riante commune.

Fairholt records the name of the Giant of Ath as Goliath,¹⁰ and it is possible that the giant Ambiorix, who appeared in the *fêtes communales* of the twentieth century, is another figure. It was not uncommon, in earlier times, to give the giants Biblical names—a Samson appeared with a Hercules at London in 1522, for instance¹¹—and there may have been a close connection between them and the miracle-plays. Such

¹⁰ See *English Pageantry*, i, p. 55, and n. 2. A post-card bearing the name of the giant ("Ambiorix (Géant). Le Tyran") and his picture, which was mailed at Ath on 26 August, 1912, has been given me by Mlle. Pierron, of Lille.

¹¹ Corpus Christi (Cantab.) MS. 298 (no. 8), cited in *Eng. Pag.*, i, p. 176.

a practice as the flogging of Judas¹² may also go back to the older drama; not every actor has the physique which could withstand such treatment as that required of the

¹² See *English Pageantry*, i, p. 16, [cf. ii, p. 156, n. 5,] i, p. 26, n. 4, and p. 27, n. 2. Judases apparently appeared in Norwich processions early in the sixteenth century.

Cf. *Letters of Susan Hale* (Boston: 1919) p. 147 f., for a description of Good Friday at Mexico City. In a letter dated Easter Sunday, 5 April, 1885, Miss Hale writes: ". . . *Friday* was Good Friday, which they celebrate here as a day of great rejoicings; all the world is in the street. . . . This country is a great place for children's toys, especially this anniversary, for they make a great time about Judas (Iscariot). The streets are full of hideous images called Judases, most of them full of fireworks, and on Saturday at ten o'clock in the morning these are all set off amid pealing of bells. [Cf. the "squibs" of the London Lord Mayor's Shows.] There are Mrs. Judases as well. Someone gave Mrs. Church a little silver Judas; it is a Devil;—the man who sold it said, 'Yes, Devil, yes, Judas, same thing.' They are all sizes and designs. I have several choice ones which we can set off on the Fourth of July. Then every being has in his hand a sort of watchman's rattle, which makes a noise called grinding the bones of Judas, and these are of every imaginable design, frying-pans, bedsteads, locomotives, flower-vases, birds, bath-tubs, and then there are little wooden carts, with wheels that grind the bones. The true thing is to buy your Judas, selecting him with care from millions, and put him in his little cart and draw him home. We saw countless children doing this, the little carts decorated with real flowers, and the children so pleased!

" . . . *Saturday* was Judas-day, and we saw from our balconies crowds of Judases carried to their doom. These big ones are the size of a man, made of frames covered with tissue paper or what masks are made of. One was hung across corners of our two streets; he had a grinning face; they had put a straw hat on him and festooned him with bread and bananas. He had a placard on him in very bad spelt Spanish, saying among other things, '*Adios amigos, voy a morir.*' But we couldn't stop to see him *morir*, but all hastened to the Zocolo, where we got separated and I was alone in a street leading off with an immense crowd all waiting to see three Judases set off. They were hung on ropes stretched across the second story, and the crowd pleased themselves with throwing missiles at them with yells of joy when anything hit; but very gentle and polite, and very nice to me. At last one went off and then another with a great rushing sound, and snorting smoke and flame which issued from the boots chiefly. Then I got away in the wake of a horse-car that cleaved the crowd—and found the Longfellows in the Cathedral. . . ."

Oberammergau cast! Perhaps Judas had already become an effigy at Norwich in the St. George procession of 1532-3.¹³

Pageantry which may have had some connection with the figure of St. George—though its tie with chivalric pageantry seems more obvious—may be found in the symbolic figures of two knights in the funeral procession of Alexander II of Russia. Among the random reminiscences of a British diplomat occurs this description, by an eye-witness of the occasion:¹⁴

The most striking feature of the procession was the "Black Knight" on foot, followed immediately by the "Golden Knight" on horseback. These were, I believe, meant to typify "The Angel of Death" and "The Angel of the Resurrection." Both knights were clad in armour from head to foot, with the vizors of their helmets down. The "Black Knight's" armour was dull sooty-black all over; he had a long black plume waving from his helmet. The "Golden Knight," mounted on a white horse, with a white plume in his helmet, wore gilded and burnished armour, which blazed like a torch in the sunlight. The weight of the black armour being very great, there had been considerable difficulty in finding a man sufficiently strong to walk six miles, carrying this tremendous burden. A gigantic young private of the Preobrajensky Guards undertook the task for a fee of one hundred roubles, but though he managed to accomplish the distance, he fainted from exhaustion on reaching the Fortress Church, and was, I heard, two months in hospital from the effects of his effort.

While the figures of the knights may have come from chivalric pageantry, it is worthy of note that the symbolism attached to them is distinctly religious. This may have been suggested by the sad occasion on which they appeared; but it seems to relate them more closely to such a figure as St. George than to any of the romantic heroes of more secular pageants. The figure of St. George has appeared at Mons since the war¹⁵ as have the four sons of Aymon, with Bayard, at Brussels.¹⁶

¹³ *Eng. Pag.*, i, p. 26, n. 4, already referred to. There seem to have been two Judases on this occasion, and four in 1535 (*ibid.*, p. 27, n. 2.)

¹⁴ From *The Vanished Poms of Yesterday*, by Lord Frederick Hamilton, (New York: 1920) p. 165 f.

¹⁵ *Post-Bellum Giants*, p. 7. The folk-song sung on this occasion need not be reprinted here, but may be compared with the Antwerp songs given above.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

The modern attitude of the Church toward folk-customs such as we have been considering, is expressed in the preface of Jacques Boulenger to Jean Baffier's *Nos Géants d'Auterfoës*:¹⁷

Or, les géants, bâtisseurs des villes, des clochers, des forts châteaux, des belles églises, experts aux travaux champêtres, amis des petites gens, ennemis du diable, étaient les serviteurs de Dieu, et la foi qu'on avait en leurs histoires n'empêchait pas les paysans de prier avec ferveur Marie et son Fils. Toutefois, M. Baffier a souvent entendu, vers 1860, le curé de sa paroisse prêcher contre les contes de la veillée, voire contre les danses, les chansons, les dictons, les coutumes du pays qu'il regardait comme des superstitions païennes. Et cette malveillance de l'Église pour les légendes et les anciens usages de nos provinces chagrine M. Baffier. Hélas! c'est bien vainement qu'il s'en désole, je le crains, et qu'il exhorte, au nom de la morale, Mgr. l'évêque de Nevers et son clergé à admettre ces traditions; j'entends bien que saint Éloi et saint Martin faisaient très bon ménage dans l'âme paysanne avec Gargantua et les fées; mais l'Église romaine ne saurait plus fermer les yeux aujourd'hui sur des liaisons illégitimes à ce point. . . .

The connection between the legends recorded by M. Baffier, and such pageantry as we have been noting, may be assumed. M. Boulenger continues:

Les légendes des saints étaient souvent fort semblables par le fond aux histoires des géants; toutefois, les bienheureux étaient à l'ordinaire plus badins et leurs travaux, pour ainsi parler, plus féeriques; ils ne détestaient pas de se railler un peu des humains et d'étonner leur monde, comme fit saint Éloi, le jour que, chez un maréchal qui doutait de son habileté professionnelle, il coupa froidement le paturon d'un 'chivau,' cloua un fer au sabot en moins de temps qu'il n'en faut pour le dire, et rajusta la jambe tranchée de telle sorte que le cheval s'en alla plus gaillard qu'il n'était venu. Jean de l'Ours et Gargantua étaient moins facétieux et, parce que leurs histoires avaient plus de noblesse, le petit Jean s'y intéressait davantage.

¹⁷ *Nos Géants d'Auterfoës*, by Jean Baffier (Paris: 1920), tells the "geste populaire et berrichonne" of Gargantua, which the author got from his father, "un vrai paysan." The charm of its style is noteworthy. I am indebted to Professor van Roosbroeck for calling the book to my attention. (This quotation is on p. 10.)

Le père Baffier était un vrai paysan. Il savait, car les anciens de Neuvy le lui avaient appris quand il était petit, que la terre *deux fouës notre mère, est un grand corps* . . . et qu'il ne faut pas l'exploiter aveuglément, mais l'aménager avec respect. Comme ses ancêtres, il avait la religion de la terre: c'était un homme qui s'en allait greffer les sauvageons de poirier et de cerisier dans les bois. Et sa dévotion aux pierres, aux sources, aux rivières, aux prés, aux champs, aux vignes était grande, et il n'ignorait pas que les bonnes fées et les esprits les habitaient. D'ailleurs, il se souvenait d'avoir vu, dans sa prime jeunesse, des familles de géants *que battaint jà pour le diâbe autant que pour le bon Dieu, et il en avait aperçu d'une autre vacâtion que battaint pour le diâbe contre le bon Dieu. Si ça continue, ajoutait-il, ce mènement du diâbe incarné, le temps venra ben tôt, comme ça marque dans la porphétie, qu'on vaira un précipice effreyâbe à la place de la cathédrale de Nevers. Partout à l'entour sera un désert à parde de vue; y aura mais de blé dans les champs, mais d'arbages dans les prés, mais d'ârbes dans les bois, et les vignes seront defunctées. . . La terre venra chesse comme de l'amadou, le feu du ciel tumbera dessus, et la terre et le monde s'en iront en poussier. . .*

The names of the giants (mentioned *ibid.*, p. 9), are: Tord-Châgne, Tranche-Montagne, Saint Éloi, Saint Martin, Jean de l'Ours, and Gargantua.¹⁸ The admixture of saints' names is to be remarked. Not unlike such songs as we have cited is that given *le moument qu'on voyait la Géante dansant la bourrée berruyère anvê le coumandant d'armes de Sancoing, au son des vielles et des cornemuses*.¹⁹

¹⁸ M. Boulenger (*op. cit.*, p. 12) remarks: "Pour les rabelaisants, elle a cet intérêt de rappeler de la façon la plus frappante, non du tout par l'affabulation, mais, ce qui est plus intéressant, par le tour et l'accent du récit, le roman de Maître François. . . . Et je ne puis m'empêcher de rester persuadé, après avoir lu les récits du père Baffier, que Rabelais s'est proposé d'imiter les conteurs villageois qu'il avait certainement entendus souventes fois à la veillée et d'écrire dans ce style parlé et traditionnel les aventures de ses héros."

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 158 ff. M. Baffier notes (p. 155) that the *bourrée* is a kind of dance, "d'origine religieuse et guerrière." On p. 128 f., the arrival of the *géante* is described: "*Coument était venue et de là où était venue la Géante. Parsoune, à cetelle heure, ne peu mettre en doutance la venue à Sancoing de la Géante. Coument alle était venue, de là où alle était venue? Moé j'en sais ren, mais ren du tout!*"

"Charlot Robet disait qu'alle venait de Bertagne, et i' chantait une chanson que marquait son voyage en parlant des Pays qu'alle avait traversés. Je m'en rappelle pus de cetelle chanson. Le père Bordier disait qu'alle venait de Langres, par Autun et Nevers. Girard le plemeu de brères

. . . On causait toujour en tout et pour tout de Gargantua, que tenait cheus nous la pus haute place du pinâcle, après le grand Dieu du Ciel, parce qu'il était le grand esprit de la Terre de cheus nous. Voéla don' coument le père Lyondon, le vieus lictin, a mis en écriture à la main la bourrée de la Géante, cependant que mon grand-père la disait:

Dedans Cincoing	}	(bis)
L'y a la Pardris grise,		
Dedans Cincoing		
Tout l' mond' la counaît ben		
Dame Gargantua	}	(bis)
Vin' à la Pardris grise,		
A la bourrée		
Qu' alle a fort ben dansée		
Les artisans	}	(bis)
De ville et de campagne,		
Tous les paisans,		
En avaint l' cuer content.		
Les grands seigneurs,	}	(bis)
Les bourgeois de la ville,		
Tous les grands sires		
En avaint du plaisir,		
Tous les sargents	}	(bis)
Et tous les capitaines,		
Tous les ech'vins		
Et tous les miliciens.		
Le grand Pervot,	}	(bis)
Et le coumandant d'armes,		
Tous les guerriers		
Etaint émociounés		

J'ai toujour ouï-dire que c'était Gargantua que l'avait faite sus le moument cetelle chanson que mon grand-père Regnaud m'a chantée souventes foés. . .

These few notes will show that pageantry which seems to survive from the miracle-plays has not died out, and that even where its origin has been forgotten, it is still connected

asseurait qu'alle venait de l'Auvargne, par Clermont et Moulins, le père Enault m'a açartené qu'alle venait des Flandres, par Lille, Paris, Bourges. Mon grand-père Regnaud la tenait pour berruyère simpelment, et la mère à Ugène crai qu'alle venait de la Marche. . . ."

(if only through the kermess) with the Church. Perhaps in every case a direct descent from the miracle-play cannot be proved, but the influence of the sacred drama may, in most cases, be felt; and if the Judases have become toys, and Lyderic part of a *cortège comique*, men are but children of a larger growth, and still hold to their playthings.

ROBERT WITHINGTON